

BOOK REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS DE LIVRES

Marisol Estrella (Ed.). (2000). *Learning from Change: Issues and Experiences in Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation*. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre. 274 pages.

Reviewed by Ronald Mackay

Always welcome is a collection of well-written and well-edited papers, each based on direct field experience with a significant challenge – especially when the theme is billed as one of the “great remaining frontiers and challenges in development, with implications for learning and change which are at once methodological, institutional and personal.” This high-profile billing is given in the preface by Robert Chambers, whose decades of seminal work in development evaluation with the poorest constituencies in the developing world have provided us with such widely used and copied participatory approaches and instruments as Rapid Rural Appraisal and Participatory Rural Appraisal.

Central to the book are 12 case studies from around the world, all presented at a conference hosted by the Institute for Rural Reconstruction in the Philippines in 1997. The case studies have been organized into three sections, each representing a common dominant theme: Part 1 – Methodological Innovations; Part 2 – Learning with Communities; and Part 3 – Changing Institutions. Almost all of the papers are written primarily from the perspective of expert project field-workers faced with an immediate and increasing need – and often sponsor encouragement – to develop practical and credible participatory monitoring systems to help improve the implementation of development projects. Hence the case studies are rich with operational detail and take the reader right into the centre of each

Corresponding authors: Dr. Ronald Mackay, Professor Emeritus,
Department of Education, Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. W,
Montreal, QC H3G 1M8; <ronald.mackay@sympatico.ca>

Ms. Nathalie Dubois, Étudiante au Doctorat en analyse des politiques publiques,
École nationale d'administration publique, 4750 avenue Henri-Julien, 5^e étage,
Montréal, QC H2T 3E5; <Nathalie_Dubois@enap.uquebec.ca>

project described. While only occasionally does an author fall into the trap of blaming a caricatured monolithic “traditional” monitoring and evaluation approach for much of the failure of development efforts to date, there is relatively little recognition of the continuous effort by the evaluation community since the 1960s to find equitable, responsive, and participatory approaches. This is a minor criticism of a book by development practitioners who are making serious efforts to come to grips with incorporating information systems into their work with a view to encouraging individual, group, and organizational learning. However, it does serve to remind the mainstream evaluation community that evaluation techniques are employed as essential but ancillary skills in a wide range of endeavours.

As a means of providing coherence in the form of a book, the 12 case studies are introduced by a chapter written by the editor, Marisol Estrella from the Institute for Popular Democracy in the Philippines. The book’s cohesion is further enhanced by a final section, Part 4 — Conclusions, in which leading international development practitioners identify and extract most of the critical elements of participatory monitoring in the case studies and do a creditable job of contextualizing them in the current management, organizational learning, and evaluation literature. The “Glossary of acronyms and abbreviations” is complete and very useful, given the plethora of abbreviations used in each of the chapters.

Estrella’s introductory chapter, “Learning from Change,” is a fair account of the emergence of the need for participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) systems in management in general. It also briefly summarizes the practical challenges facing development workers who seek to enlist the participation of project personnel unused to contributing to the creation of systems of control, learning, and accountability. Indeed, she raises even more questions than are answered in the succeeding 12 case studies.

The four case studies in Part 1, “Methodological Innovations,” are drawn from experiences with projects in community forestry in Nepal, farmer-to-farmer extension in Mexico, agricultural technologies for improved natural resource management and poverty reduction in Bolivia and Laos, and sustainable agriculture in northeastern Brazil. Each is well-written and details the environments within which participatory PM&E was introduced, the innovative techniques used, and accounts of their success. The enormous challenge of engaging the full participation of all stakeholders is illustrated in

all four cases and can be characterized by reference to the first of these: the Nepal-UK Community Forestry Project in Nepal that works with 1500 forest user groups in seven separate districts to ensure that usufruct rights are enjoyed in such a way as to ensure equitable and sustainable forest management. Community forestry projects, with their multiplicity of stakeholders whose power varies and whose interests have a potential to conflict, are notoriously complex. The authors provide a fascinating and detailed description of the methods and tools used to explore and establish a common vision for sustainable management.

Part 2, "Learning with Communities," is made up of four case studies from the Philippines, Colombia, Ecuador, and West Virginia, USA. The last of these studies is most welcome and should not surprise the reader. The need to build community capacity through community-driven monitoring and evaluation is as much a need in poor communities in the developed world as it is in the developing world. It is to the credit of the enlightened conference organizers at the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction that this paper was invited, since it serves to demonstrate the challenges facing community projects seeking to build the capability of relatively disenfranchised citizens wherever they are encountered. This case reports on McDowell County, West Virginia, one of the "poorest rural communities in the United States" and one of 500 that met federal guidelines to apply for support under the Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community program established by the Clinton administration in 1993. The author describes the process and the development of a Citizen Learning Team established to take charge of PM&E. A professional researcher worked with a 15-member group made up of community members representing the county's diverse geographic, racial, age, and gender demographics to build M&E skills and leadership capacity to encourage and engage broad citizen participation in the many projects designed to address a wide array of community concerns. The author describes the processes, techniques, and tools employed. She captures the essence of participatory monitoring and evaluation by showing how people "ordinarily outside the process" are able to become informed and involved with the economic and social future of their community.

Part 3, "Changing Institutions," is more heterogeneous. The four papers deal with disparate topics. Despite the title, there is less reference to PM&E at the institutional than at the organizational level. The first case study in Part 3, an interesting account of how the

Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees developed a participatory planning, monitoring, and evaluation system for the overarching NGO that coordinates the committees, describes the institutional framework of occupation within which it is forced to operate and the social and political challenges that this presents. It is flawed by a heartfelt but misguided diatribe against the creation of program logic models, based not on rational argument against such models but on the authors' unfortunate experience of "visiting consultants who view the logical framework as a 'magic' tool." The authors choose to abandon program logic — to their probable future embarrassment when, in years to come, they better understand the tool and its value independently of how it may be abused by those who inadequately master it.

Outstanding in Part 3 is Chapter 11, Penelope Ward's account of CARE Zambia's reorientation of its development strategy from "physical development projects towards more human development emphasis aimed at building individual and organizational capacities." She describes how the household livelihood system — a holistic approach to linking the factors that affect people's livelihoods — was adopted and intentionally accompanied by a learning-centred and participatory approach in order to bring responsiveness to stakeholders' needs, priorities, and desires. She presents, with skill and confidence, the foundations of the approach — firmly based in current development, learning, and organizational theory — and the strategies adopted by CARE to encourage and institutionalize learning amongst staff at all levels of the organization. Here is an excellent example of how a well-informed approach provides the confidence to learn from principled experimentation and keep busy moving constructively ahead so that it has no time to fall into a retrospective lamentation about unsatisfactory past practices. The author is able to see the potential inherent in new tools appropriately adapted and employed, and the payoff appears to have been high in terms of moving toward meaningful participation M&E at all levels.

The last four chapters of the book — Part 4, "Conclusions" — save the volume from being merely a collection of interesting papers on a unifying theme. The host institution, the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction, appears to have intended that the conference serve to move practitioners closer to answering important questions about how, where, and when participation in the design of monitoring and evaluation systems can be most effectively employed in the field. Dindo Campilan, International Potato Center (author of Chapter 14, "Conceptual Tools for Tracking Change: Emerging Issues and

Challenges”), captures the key features of the approaches used in the 12 case studies and suggests that participation will help facilitate stakeholder control over not only programs but policy as well. Irene Gujit, International Institute for the Environment and Development (Chapter 15, “Methodological Issues in Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation”), begins to formalize core steps in the identification of indicators and, equally importantly, makes insightful observations about the central role of individual capacity building to facilitate PM&E and how to achieve it. In the following chapter, “Laying the Foundation: Capacity Building for Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation,” Deb Johnson, Sikiliza International Ltd., competently develops the theme of access through (a) opportunity — fundamentally a political and social matter and (b) ability — fundamentally a capacity issue. This is an important distinction in circumstances where it is sometimes assumed — quite erroneously — that by virtue of opportunity alone, stakeholders are prepared to participate meaningfully in monitoring and evaluation.

The final chapter, “Learning to Change by Learning from Change: Going to Scale with Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation” by John Gaventa and Jutta Blauert, both of the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, concludes the book with a masterful discussion of the complex social and political dimensions of PM&E, especially in relation to scaling up from the local or project level to the program or national/regional level. The authors stress the “ripple effect” that PM&E can have on the improved learning of the entire organization, but in doing so employ an unfortunate metaphor — they liken the first participatory steps of the M&E process to a “Trojan Horse” that can result in broad organizational improvement. Monitoring and evaluation have suffered and continue to suffer from enough suspicion without, quite unintentionally and probably due to a lack of familiarity with the Greek classics, an inadvertent and unfortunate comparison to subversive processes intent on destruction!

This book is an interesting read, especially for those members of the evaluation community who work with development teams from the grass roots up. In addition to providing valuable conceptual frameworks, lists of guidelines, and accounts of how a wide variety of tools are used in the field, it illustrates the range and complexity of situations into which practical monitoring and evaluation must be integrated for development efforts to grope their way to successful and sustainable outcomes.

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Irving Rootman, Michael Goodstadt, Brian Hyndman, David V. McQueen, Louise Potvin, Jane Springett, & Erio Ziglio (Éds.) (2001). *Evaluation in Health Promotion: Principles and Perspectives*. WHO Regional Publications, European Series, No. 92, Denmark, 533 pages.

Compte rendu par Nathalie Dubois

En administration publique, l'évaluation des activités publiques représente un exercice légitime et incontournable. La valeur ajoutée qu'apporte une évaluation à l'administration des affaires étatiques s'explique par l'amélioration des services rendus suite à cette dernière. L'évaluation est d'autant plus reconnue que des composantes des politiques publiques comme les grandes orientations budgétaires de nos gouvernements, les nouvelles formes de dispensation de services (public, privé, sans but lucratif) et la présence marquée d'organisations internationales dans nos enjeux nationaux contraignent les organisations à produire des analyses critiques de leurs activités ainsi que des impacts de celles-ci. Ces changements apportés aux politiques publiques exercent une pression de plus en plus significative sur notre gouverne et tendent à faire de l'évaluation une préoccupation centrale de nos organisations.

Le domaine de la santé publique, et plus particulièrement la promotion de la santé, n'échappe pas à cette réalité. Ainsi, l'Organisation Mondiale de la Santé a publié, en 2001, un ouvrage intitulé *Evaluation in Health Promotion: Principles and Perspectives*. Ce collectif regroupant plus de 50 collaboratrices et collaborateurs aborde un ensemble de questions se rapportant à la pratique de l'évaluation dans le domaine de la promotion de la santé. Spécifiquement, les auteurs examinent les différentes méthodes d'évaluation et proposent des guides de travail aux décideurs et aux praticiens de la santé afin qu'ils puissent les utiliser adéquatement dans leurs tâches. Soucieuse de présenter diverses perspectives d'analyse, l'équipe responsable de la publication du volume a sollicité la participation de professionnels provenant de plusieurs pays (Canada, États-Unis et pays européens) ainsi que de multiples milieux de travail (gouvernement, université, groupe de recherche, etc.).

Spécifiquement, le volume comprend cinq parties et plus de 20 chapitres. La première partie de l'ouvrage définit les principaux thèmes et modèles d'analyse employés en évaluation ainsi qu'en promotion

de la santé. Les chapitres constituant cette section présentent la pluralité des idées, des théories et de la pratique autant dans le domaine de l'évaluation que de la promotion de la santé. La deuxième partie du volume se concentre sur les grands enjeux de l'évaluation. Ainsi, guidés par la réflexion développée par Shadish, Cook, et Levinton (1991), les auteurs discutent des questions relatives à la construction et l'utilisation des connaissances, à la pratique de l'évaluation en promotion de la santé, ainsi qu'aux implications méthodologiques et épistémologiques des méthodes qualitatives et quantitatives en sciences sociales. La troisième partie survole les principaux contextes d'évaluation en promotion de la santé, alors que la quatrième traite des grandes composantes environnementales de ces activités promotionnelles. Finalement, la cinquième partie présente une synthèse des problématiques relatives à l'évaluation des activités en promotion de la santé et tire des conclusions sur les grandes recommandations du groupe de travail mis sur pied par l'Organisation Mondiale de la Santé.

Malgré l'envergure du projet, l'ouvrage demeure fort pertinent. D'un point de vue théorique, comme le volume n'est pas un «livre de recettes» en évaluation, il permet aux auteurs d'aborder plus aisément les fondements théoriques et méthodologiques de l'évaluation dans le domaine de la promotion de la santé. Cette perspective d'analyse permet de présenter certains enjeux épistémologiques, théoriques, et méthodologiques très contemporains et trop souvent négligés par nos débats disciplinaires. De plus, le volume consacre une place importante à l'étude de diverses applications d'évaluation en exposant un large éventail d'expériences canadiennes, américaines et européennes. La présentation de ces cas conduit le lecteur vers des propositions de grilles visant l'amélioration des projets d'évaluation. Cet équilibre entre les fondements épistémologiques, la théorie, et la pratique incite à des échanges riches et stimulants autant pour les chercheurs, les praticiens, et les décideurs que pour les étudiants.

D'un point de vue technique, la lecture de l'ouvrage demeure agréable et simple, car les auteurs expriment clairement et de manière accessible leurs propos. Le document est constitué de chapitres distincts mais tout de même organisés et articulés dans un ensemble cohérent et stimulant. De plus, comme les auteurs font régulièrement référence aux autres textes de l'ouvrage, le lecteur peut plus aisément assimiler les idées défendues dans chaque chapitre et ainsi développer une meilleure compréhension globale de la problématique. Évidemment, comme tout ouvrage collectif, certains auteurs

ont une meilleure compréhension de l'évaluation ou de la promotion de la santé que d'autres mais, grâce au travail de planification et de relecture effectué par le groupe de travail, le document demeure un ouvrage homogène et crédible.

Néanmoins, et comme le précisent les auteurs, ce volume ne peut répondre aux besoins de tous les lecteurs. À mon sens, bien que l'ouvrage laisse transparaître la richesse des fondements théoriques et empiriques de la santé publique, elle restreint trop souvent les fondements théoriques de l'évaluation à cette seule discipline. Selon moi, trop peu d'auteurs font référence aux idées maîtresses de l'évaluation des programmes découlant entre autres des travaux de Scriven, Guba et Lincoln, Campbell et Cook, Cronbach, Weiss, Rossi et Freeman. De plus, bien qu'approuvant les recommandations¹ du groupe de travail, j'aurais apprécié un traitement plus approfondi de ces dernières, favorisant ainsi une application plus efficace et rapide de celles-ci dans nos organisations.

NOTE

1. Les recommandations du groupe de travail sont que les décideurs doivent:
 - 1) encourager les approches participatives en évaluation;
 - 2) consacrer un minimum de 10% de ses ressources financières reliées aux activités de promotion de la santé à l'évaluation;
 - 3) s'assurer que l'information reliée au processus et aux résultats soit intégrée dans l'évaluation;
 - 4) supporter l'utilisation de méthodologies multiples en évaluation;
 - 5) favoriser le perfectionnement et l'éducation permettant le développement de l'expertise en évaluation;
 - 6) créer et supporter des opportunités permettant d'échanger l'information concernant les méthodes d'évaluation en promotion de la santé par l'entremise de conférences, d'ateliers, de réseaux ou autres;
 - 7) construire une infrastructure solide d'évaluation en s'assurant du financement, du perfectionnement, du développement organisationnel et du réseautage.

RÉFÉRENCE

- Shadish, W.R., Cook, T.D., & Levinton, L.C. (1991). *Foundation of program evaluation: Theories and practice*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.